

From: Shawn Garvin/R3/USEPA/US
Sent: 1/7/2012 11:34:05 AM
To: William Early/R3/USEPA/US; Borsellino.Ron@epamail.epa.gov; Carney.Dennis@epamail.epa.gov; Jon Capacasa/R3/USEPA/US@EPA
CC:
Subject: Fw: AP: Residents: EPA promises to send fresh water to Pa. town with tainted wells

FYI...

----- Original Message -----

From: Betsaida Alcantara
Sent: 01/07/2012 11:30 AM EST
To: Shawn Garvin; Bob Sussman; Brendan Gilfillan
Subject: AP: Residents: EPA promises to send fresh water to Pa. town with tainted wells

Residents: EPA promises to send fresh water to Pa. town with tainted wells

By Associated Press, Published: January 6

ALLENTOWN, Pa. — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has promised to deliver water to a northeastern Pennsylvania village where a natural gas driller has been accused of tainting homeowners' wells with methane and possibly hazardous chemicals, residents said Friday.

Homeowners in Dimock Township have been without a reliable supply of clean water since Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., the Houston-based drilling firm blamed for polluting their aquifer, stopped making daily deliveries more than a month ago.

Three Dimock residents said the EPA told them Friday that it's hiring a private contractor to deliver water to their homes, about 20 miles south of the New York state line. The EPA said Friday that no decision had been made.

The EPA told residents only a month ago their water was fine, then backtracked as more sampling data came in that the agency said merited further investigation.

Cabot won permission from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to stop daily deliveries of bulk and bottled water on Nov. 30. Since then, anti-drilling groups have been paying to have water delivered to about a dozen households. But the deliveries are sporadic and, with winter setting in, residents say they can't continue indefinitely.

"We're ecstatic that we're at least getting our water back, that we'll have a safe source of water," said Dimock resident Julie Sautner, who said an EPA official called Friday to tell her about the water deliveries. "We've been left like a bunch of chickens scratching around for water. We shouldn't have to live like this."

Residents were furious when the EPA told them in late November that sampling data reviewed by the agency did not show that their well water posed an "immediate health threat." EPA officials returned to Dimock last week to reopen the probe and said they may begin their own sampling of residents' water.

Another resident, Scott Ely, said his family ran out of water Friday. He said he was evaluating next steps with his wife when the EPA called.

"They said they are definitely bringing us water," Ely said.

Ely said he was surprised by the move, considering that EPA officials who visited his house last week said then that "they couldn't come out and bring water to us unless there was an immediate danger to our health."

A third resident, Jean Carter, got a similar call Friday.

The EPA official told Carter that "she realized that some people were going to be out of water, and she wanted to know if we needed water, that they were going to be making deliveries in the next couple of days to help out with the situation," Carter said.

At the request of the EPA, federal public health researchers began a separate probe in Dimock last month. The Agency

for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry is “conducting a public health evaluation of the available Dimock private well data, to identify potential health threats to community members still using their private well water,” spokeswoman Vivi Abrams said via email this week.

Cabot has denied responsibility for the contamination and asserts Cabot’s water meets federal drinking-water standards. Spokesman George Stark said that the EPA informed the company it is meeting with Dimock residents but that Cabot had not been told the agency plans to deliver water to them.

Residents blame the pollution on a drilling technique known as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in which water, sand and chemicals are blasted deep underground to extract natural gas from shale rock. The use of fracking has led to dramatic gains in U.S. natural gas production over the past few years, but environmentalists question its safety.

A focus of gas drilling companies has been the Marcellus Shale, a massive formation underlying New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia. Pennsylvania has been the center of activity, with thousands of wells drilled in the past three or four years.

Last month, the EPA for the first time suggested a link between fracking and groundwater pollution, after studying a gas field in Pavillion, Wyo. Industry officials rebutted the EPA’s draft report on Pavillion and say fracking has been used safely for decades.